

Leadership Lake County, Lakeland Community College, and Laketran Partner to Expand Access to High School Leadership Development

July 15, 2026 – Kirtland, Ohio – Leadership Lake County, Lakeland Community College, and Laketran have announced a new partnership designed to make Leadership Lake County's Junior Leadership Program more accessible to high school students throughout Lake County by removing one of the final barriers to participation—transportation.

Beginning with the 2026-2027 program year, Lakeland Community College will serve as the central hub for Leadership Lake County's monthly Junior Leadership Program, which meets from August through April. Students will gather at The President's Corner before the start of each program day, providing a safe, secure, and welcoming location while they wait for programming to begin. At the conclusion of each session, students may also remain at The President's Corner while waiting for transportation home.

Through Laketran's GO program and the EZfare app, students will be able to utilize existing Laketran fixed routes to travel between their communities and Lakeland Community College or access Laketran's Dial-a-Ride service when appropriate. The partnership significantly expands access to the program for students and families who may not have reliable transportation.

The collaboration is the culmination of Leadership Lake County's ongoing efforts to remove barriers that can prevent students from participating in high-quality leadership development opportunities. Working closely with local school districts and community partners, the organization has explored ways to reduce time away from the classroom, increase scholarship support to offset tuition costs, and identify practical transportation solutions. With this new partnership, transportation—the final significant barrier identified by students and families—has been addressed.

"Leadership development opportunities should be available to every student with the desire to grow, regardless of their transportation options," said Tricia Johnston, President and CEO of Leadership Lake County. "We are deeply grateful to Lakeland Community College and Laketran for their generous collaboration and shared commitment to investing in the next generation of leaders. Together, we are creating more equitable access to experiences that build confidence, strengthen leadership skills, connect students with their community, and prepare them for success in college, careers, and civic life."

The Junior Leadership Program provides high school students with immersive leadership experiences that introduce them to business, government, education, healthcare, manufacturing, nonprofit organizations, and other industries throughout Lake County. Students develop essential skills including communication, teamwork, critical thinking, ethical decision-making, networking, and civic engagement while interacting directly with community leaders and exploring career pathways available close to home.

Youth leadership development programs provide students with experiences that extend beyond the traditional classroom. Participants strengthen their self-confidence, broaden their understanding of community challenges and opportunities, build relationships with peers from across Lake County, and discover how their unique talents can positively impact their schools, workplaces, and communities. By investing in young leaders today, Leadership Lake County and its partners are helping develop the skilled workforce, engaged citizens, and community leaders Lake County will need in the future.

"Lakeland Community College is proud to serve as the central hub for the Junior Leadership Program," said Sunil Ahuja, Ph.D., President of Lakeland Community College. "Opening our doors provides these promising young leaders with a welcoming space to connect and collaborate. This partnership perfectly aligns with Lakeland's mission to foster community growth and education, and we are thrilled to team up with Leadership Lake County and Laketran to help remove the transportation barrier and make these life-changing opportunities accessible to every high school student in our region."

"Public transportation does more than move people—it connects them to education, career pathways, and opportunities that shape their future," said Laketran President Brian Falkowski. "This partnership demonstrates what's possible when organizations come together to remove barriers for our youth. We're proud to work alongside Leadership Lake County and Lakeland Community College to make this program accessible to more students throughout Lake County. By investing in young leaders today, we're helping build a stronger workforce and brighter future for Lake County."

Leadership Lake County recently announced that its middle school Youth Leadership Academy has reached capacity for the 2026-2027 program year. Enrollment remains open for the Junior Leadership Program, and interested high school students and their families are encouraged to apply while space remains available.

For more information about the Junior Leadership Program or to begin the application process, contact Youth Program Director Gina Fletcher at gletcher@leadershiplc.org or visit <https://www.leadershiplakecounty.org/junior-leadership-program>.

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About Leadership Lake County

Leadership Lake County is dedicated to developing leaders who strengthen Lake County through innovative leadership education, meaningful community engagement, and lifelong connections. Through nationally recognized leadership development programs serving youth and adults, Leadership Lake County equips participants with the knowledge, skills, and relationships needed to make a lasting impact in their workplaces, organizations, and communities. Since its founding, the organization has graduated more than 1,300 alumni who continue to serve as leaders throughout Northeast Ohio.

About Lakeland Community College

For nearly 60 years, Lakeland Community College has impacted thousands of lives through learning. Founded in 1967, Lakeland was the first college in Ohio created by a vote of the people. The college is currently led by Sunil Ahuja, Ph.D., who serves as the institution's sixth president. True to its mission, the college provides quality learning opportunities to meet the needs of the community at its campus in Kirtland and online.

Accredited by The Higher Learning Commission, Lakeland offers more than 100 associate degree and certificate programs leading to high-demand careers or transfer to four-year institutions. The college

also provides access to bachelor's and graduate degrees, as well as lifelong learning opportunities with 10 four-year institutions through the Holden Partnership Program.

About Laketran

Proudly serving over 700,000 riders each year, Laketran is Lake County, Ohio's regional public transportation system offering in-county Local Routes, door-to-door Dial-a-Ride, rideshare with Rides on Demand, and commuter Park-n-Ride routes with service between Lake County, Downtown Cleveland and University Circle.

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